

Method 9 - The Book Survey Method of Bible Study (P. Rhebergen)

The Book Survey Method of Bible study is the first of three methods of Bible study that, together, will give you an extremely comprehensive view of each book of the Bible. These three methods will require the greatest effort on your part but will ultimately yield the best results. Each of the three emphasizes a different aspect of one overall process of study:

Survey (Method 9 - Book Survey Method) - obtain a detailed overview of a particular book of the Bible.

Analysis (Method 10 - Chapter Analysis Method) - study each chapter of the book in great detail.

Synthesis (Method 11 - Book Synthesis Method) - take what you learned in the previous two study stages and put it all back together, drawing conclusions as you go and gaining an appreciation of the whole of the book.

The basic goal of the Book Survey Method of Bible study is to gain a detailed understanding as to why the book was written, its context, its theme, its structure, and its content.

9.1 - Tools

9.1.1 - Bible and several additional modern translations

9.1.2 - Bible dictionary and / or Bible encyclopedia

9.1.3 - Bible handbook, such as Unger's or Halley's

9.1.4 - Old and New Testament surveys

9.1.5 - Cultural contextualization tools

9.2 - Hints

9.2.1 - If you have already done a Book Background Bible study on the book you may wish to refer to it for background information useful to you in this study.

9.3 - Steps

Step 1 - Read the book following the suggestions below:

9.3.1.1 - Read through the book in one sitting. After Psalms, Isaiah is the Bible's largest book and the average reader can read through it in a few hours. Reading the book in this manner gives you a good overview of its contents. For the larger books you may wish to divide it into two more manageable sections, which you can then read with a break between.

9.3.1.2 - Read through the book in a recent translation so that the language usage is current and will not distract from the contents of the book.

9.3.1.3 - Read through the book as though the verse and chapter divisions are non-existent so as to get the flow of the book and the relationship of its ideas to one another.

9.3.1.4 - Read through the book several times, you will be surprised at what you notice in a second or third reading that you missed originally.

9.3.1.5 - Read through the book without referring to any external notes of any kind, it is important to concentrate upon the text of the book itself without using any interpretive device.

9.3.1.6 - Read through the book with prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and open your eyes to the lesson(s) the author wants you to learn.

9.3.1.7 - Read through the book with pen or pencil in hand and begin to take notes and make observations on what you are reading on the second or third time through.

Step 2 - Make notes on what you read, this step actually begins toward the end of step one. Write down your impressions of the book and important details that you discover. Use the following list to guide you:

9.3.2.1 - Is the book written in one of the following genres: historic, poetic, prophetic, law, biographic, correspondence, narrative, etc.?

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- 9.3.2.2 - Note your first impressions as you read the book. What do you think was the purpose of the author?
- 9.3.2.3 - What words does the author use frequently? What words does the author consider important or significant?
- 9.3.2.4 - Is there a key verse to the book or a key statement?
- 9.3.2.5 - What is the literary style of the author? How does the style of writing relate to the message of the book?
- 9.3.2.6 - Does the author reveal his emotions? How would the readers have responded to this emotion? How do you respond to this emotion?
- 9.3.2.7 - Make note of what you believe to be the main theme(s) of the book. Is there a major thrust to the book?
- 9.3.2.8 - How is the book structured? Remember that our chapters and verses (and often our paragraphs) were all added centuries after the original authors completed their work. Around what aspects of reality (people, geography, events, time, etc.) is the book centered?
- 9.3.2.9 - How do people fit into the book? Are there central characters and if so what part(s) do they play in the book?

Step 3 - Do a background study of the book. In this step you will essentially be following the outline given in the Book Background Method of Bible study.

Step 4 - Make a horizontal chart of the book's contents. A horizontal chart is a pictorial representation of the book on one or two sheets of paper and which allows you to visually grasp the general details of the book. Follow these steps to make a horizontal chart:

- 9.3.4.1 - On a single sheet of paper, or at the most two, make as many vertical columns as there are chapters in the book you are studying.
- 9.3.4.2 - Re-read the book and note the major divisions, usually similar to the chapter divisions though not always, and make headings relating to these divisions in as few words as possible.
- 9.3.4.3 - Read through the book again, yes this will be the fifth time you read the book, and think of a short title for each chapter and record them just below the divisions of the previous step, above each of the columns. Some characteristics of good titles are that they are:
 - short, usually one to four words.
 - picturesque, helping you visualize the chapter contents.
 - from the text if possible.
 - unique and not used as chapter titles of earlier studies.
 - able to show where in the book the chapter falls.
- 9.3.4.4 - Read through the book again and create a series of titles for the paragraphs.

Step 5 - Make a preliminary outline of the book from all that you have done before. You are concentrating on the major points of the book as later you will be using the Book Synthesis Method in which you will make a detailed outline of the book. Some helpful points:

- 9.3.5.1 - Make an preliminary outline of the book, concentrating on the major points.
- 9.3.5.2 - Have your outline organized in sequence of descending importance. List major points first followed by the minor points.
- 9.3.5.3 - Use paragraphs will help with the outline as they are generally grouped around major ideas.
- 9.3.5.4 - Compare your outline to those done by others to see where they differ and where they are similar.

Step 6 - Write out a personal application and remember to return periodically to this step so that you can evaluate your progress.

Reference:

1. Warren, Richard, with William A. Shell, 12 Dynamic Bible Study Methods, Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1987.

Method 9 - The Book Survey Method of Bible Study (Chart)

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| 1. Book: | Number of Chapters: | Number of Times Read: |
| 2. Notes on the Book: | | |
| Reference Works Used: | | |
| 3. Book Background: | | |
| 4. Horizontal Chart (use blank sheet of paper and attach): | | |
| 5. Preliminary Outline: | | |
| 6: Application / Evaluation: | | |